

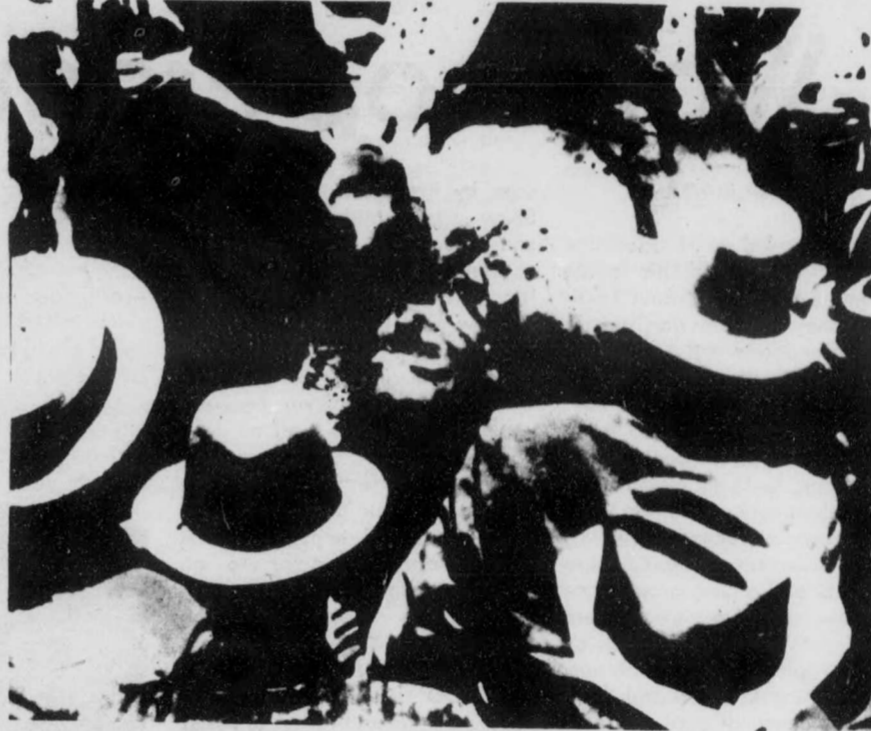
## The Story of Bonnie and Clyde

Many of us wonder what it was that led people such as Bonnie and Clyde to the life of crime. Through the years, there have been various theories explaining deviant behavior. If Cesare Lombroso, an 18th century biologist, would have witnessed the crime of Bonnie & Clyde he would surely have said that the cause of their life in crime was attributed to their atavistic characteristics (Atavism is the appearance in an individual of a remotely ancestral character.) We know from their physical characteristics that this was not evident.

Lombroso's theory of crime included bodily characteristics but William Sheldon, a scientist at Harvard in the early 1940's and 50's went one step further. Sheldon believed that there were three major body types that people fit into. The first, the endomorphica, had soft and round physical characteristics and who were said to be slow, extroverted and hedonistic. The second body type was mesomorphic, where people were said to be physically hard and round but aggressive and active. The third being ectomorphic included body types of fragile and thin individuals who were self-restrained and introverted. Sheldon believed that the mesomorphics were the ones who quickly adopted to deviant behaviors. He claimed this because of their athletic builds and aggressiveness. Yet Bonnie Parker for one, could have been excluded from this theory because this young criminal was a slender blond, under five feet tall.

An American sociologist by the name of R.K. Merton explained deviant behaviours through Durkheim's idea of structure and anomie. Merton went on to explain the goals that individuals are faced with each day in our society. The failure to achieve these goals produces stress in many individuals. He suggested that such strains come from: Society's standards of keeping up with the "Jones"; Advertisements telling people to buy things for the "ideal home," "ideal woman", "ideal man", or "ideal family"; parental guidance to "Follow in your fathers footsteps"; and "credit" in which you can buy now and pay later. At times

individuals can be confused between their goals and the means they have. Then they are forced to put an emphasis on their goals and put a de-emphasis on their means. Merton states that individuals are not born criminals as opposed to the theories of Lombroso and Sheldon. On the other hand, Merton claimed that society has set the same goals for everyone even though they do not provide equal opportunity for all. If individuals are confronted with such strains, instead of reducing their



WET RAGS . . . That was how one of the officers who took part in the ambush described the dead bodies of Clyde (above) and Bonnie (below). It was the end that both knew awaited them and the beginning of the legend that was to come.

goals they find another way to get their means. This usually leads them to criminal acts such as robbery or prostitution. In order to avoid apprehension from the law, these individuals can be found murdering those who might witness their crimes. As for Bonnie and Clyde, they were going through the American depression, so it was very difficult for them to get their goals without any means. Merton's theory of anomie could very well be applied to the deviant behaviour of Bonnie and Clyde.

Another theory explaining crime is a "Differential Association" adopted by E.H. Sutherland. He believed that if there was constant association with a certain party, then an individual would have tendency to conform to that party's way of living. Apparently when interviewed after Bonnie's death, Mrs. Parker claimed that Bonnie had never been mixed up with in the life of crime until she met Clyde Barrow. Therefore it would be possible to say that as Bonnie continuously associated with Clyde she conformed to his way of life.

As previously mentioned the body theories of Lombroso and Sheldon could not properly explain why Bonnie and Clyde adopted criminal behaviour. However Merton's theory of anomie could be a better explanation. Even during the American depression, it is a wonder that everyone else unable to achieve their goals did not become deviant. As for Sutherland's theory of differential association, it is possible to say that Bonnie's association with Clyde caused her conformity to his criminal way of life, but no one really knows, yes, Bonnie and Clyde are still a legend to this day. But will we ever know what really causes people such as they to take on criminal ways of life?

